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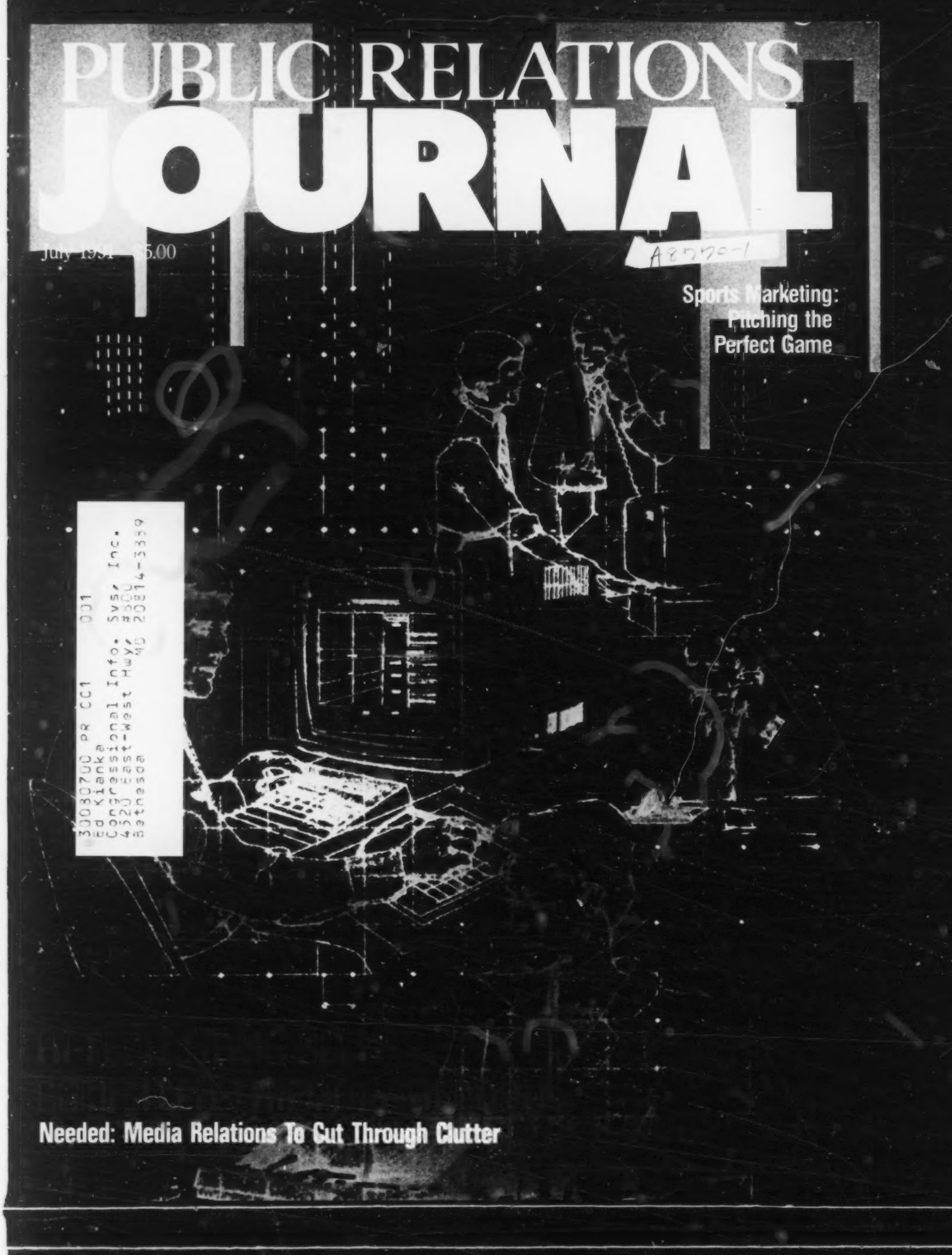
Sports Marketing: Pitching the Perfect Game



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Needed: Media Relations To Cut Through Clutter

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

July 1991 Vol. 47 No. 7

FEATURES

10 Sports Marketing: Firms Try To Pitch The Perfect Game

Public relations firms have been slow to take advantage of clients' booming interest in sports-related marketing. Now, many executives are poising their firms to seize the lucrative opportunities the specialty presents. But opinions vary on how deeply firms should be involved. *Adam Shell*

14 Hi-Tech Firms Seek Computer-Friendly Recruits

Hi-tech firms have one common concern: how to find the qualified people they need to serve their clients. While general writing and public relations proficiency count more than specific technology-related background for entry-level hires, a "comfort level" with computers is also required. *John Kador*

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Sharon A. Stahlheber

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26 What's Right? PRSA National Conference To Examine Ethical Cases

Six hypothetical cases involving ethical dilemmas practitioners might face are presented. What actions would you take? These and other ethical issues will be discussed at PRSA's National Conference in November.
Richard H. Truitt, APR and Davis Young, Fellow, PRSA

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Cover: *Gary Kaemmer/The Image Bank*

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Look for the silver lining

With recession and downsizing clouding the public relations horizon, it becomes especially important to look for the silver lining—the outstanding work going on in the profession that, very often, addresses and makes better some very bad situations. In tough times, it's also good to look on the bright, positive and even humorous side of public relations practice for outstanding marketing, community relations, internal corporate communications and public service campaigns that improve the quality of life and sometimes even the bottom line. Recognition of such outstanding programs enhances the industry's professional status and motivates those working in the field to strive for excellence.

No less than 40 excellent examples of solutions to the often thorny problems of our times were presented on June 13, at the 1991 Silver Anvil Awards banquet. The coveted "Best of Silver Anvil" award went to Dow Chemical Co., Midland, MI, for its "Recycle This!" program with Ketchum Public Relations, Washington, DC, and Seahawk Associates, Chicago. The program involved a road show that played in high schools and corporations in 100 cities to promote plastic recycling to a quarter of a million students, teachers and parents.

Health, education, the environment, crisis management and transportation were among areas addressed by this year's Silver Anvil winners, ranging from giant corporations like McDonald's and Saturn Corp., through organizations like the Idaho Potato Commission, American Cancer Society and the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island Foundation, to smaller governmental groups, such as Albuquerque Public Schools, the City of Athens, GA, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation. Perhaps the most fun campaigns earning Silver Anvils were put together by Binney & Smith, the Crayola crayon people, who "retired" eight colors and introduced eight new ones, and the Peanut Advisory Board's tongue-in-cheek celebration of peanut butter's 100th birthday.

Everyone in the profession can learn something by studying the 1991 Silver Anvil Award programs, all of which were conducted in 1990. We published a complete list of winners on page 33 of our May issue. While we do not have the space to present each winning entry in detail, we will continue to look to Silver Anvil programs to support our feature articles on a topical basis. In the meantime, you can order a set of 1991 Silver Anvil summaries from PRSA's Information Center. Prepaid cost to PRSA members is $20; non-members, $25. Add $3 to all orders for shipping and handling.

Susan L. Fry, Editor

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The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is an individual membership professional society of 15,357 public relations practitioners. Its major services to members include programs of Professional Development and Accreditation, an Information Center, publications, tracking of issues of national concern, and promotion of ethical practice through adherence to PRSA's "Code of Professional Standards." PRSA's mission is "To serve the public need for understanding and cooperation among its diverse interests by fostering high professional and ethical standards for all those practicing public relations."

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Event sponsors audition entertainers

Seeking niche, many companies seek tie-ins with performing arts

Last year it was American Express sponsoring a concert tour featuring Frank Sinatra and Liza Minelli. This year it's Schieffelin & Somerset promoting its Johnnie Walker Black brand by sponsoring the national tour of the Broadway hit, "City of Angels." Not to mention L'eggs' new two-year deal to sponsor the Ice Capades. And next year Fuji Xerox plans to sponsor a 24-show tour of "The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber in Concert" in Japan to celebrate its 30th anniversary.

For many corporate sponsors, sports is no longer the only sponsorship game in town. There's a growing trend among corporations to spend increasing amounts of their sponsorship dollars on the performing and fine arts. "This is the first sponsorship of its kind for one of our productions," said Barry Weissler, producer of the "City of Angels" tour. "And we believe such a cross-promotion is the wave of the future for theatrical marketing."

In 1990, companies spent $150 million on arts-related sponsorships. This year, spending on the arts is expected to increase 17% to $176 million, according to *Special Events Report*, a Chicago-based newsletter that tracks corporate sponsorships. As of April, more than 50 companies have inked deals in 1991 to sponsor dance, theater and museum events.

Companies are moving in this direction because it provides good exposure at a low price tag. They can sponsor a national tour of a play that runs for many months, for example, much cheaper than one nationally televised event over a single weekend, according to Stephen Disson, principal at the D&F Group, a Washington, DC-based event marketing firm. Sponsors that tie-in with touring companies also benefit from the grass-roots marketing opportunities that are available in each city.

"Companies are looking for something different," said Disson, whose firm worked on the "City of Angels" and Andrew Lloyd Webber deals. "More and more companies are saying sports is becoming too diluted and that it's tougher to find a niche.

"Arts and entertainment is the niche many are looking for," he continued. "With spending on the arts down, these organizations need sponsors."

Corporate sponsors are looking to the performing arts and entertainment arenas as alternatives to sporting events. A 43-city tour of "City of Angels," 1990 Tony Award-winner for "Best Musical," is being sponsored by Johnnie Walker Black.

Photo: Craig Schwartz Photography

Indirect promotion of alcohol

Johnnie Walker Black's sponsorship of the 43-city tour of "City of Angels" marks the first time the brand has sponsored a theatrical production. As exclusive title sponsor, the brand will be featured in all print and television advertising and other promotions in each city.

With television advertising of alcoholic beverages forbidden, the brand also benefits from the exposure it gets from the verbal mentions it receives in the commercial spots touting the musical.

"The exposure has been very positive," said Lori Smith, president of Smith Communications, the Culver City, CA-based public relations firm that represents the brand. "The spots aren't saying 'drink Johnnie Walker.' Instead, they're supporting the arts. It's not a blatant ad for alcohol."

Grass-roots marketing

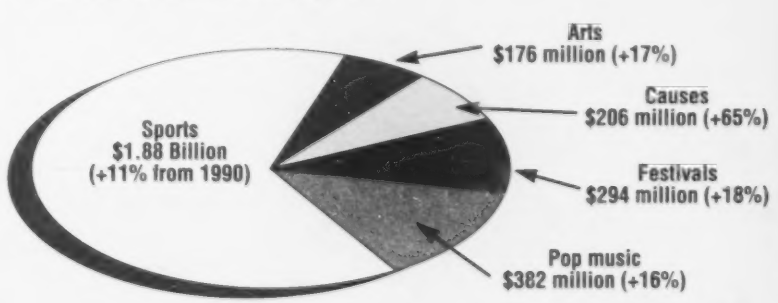
L'eggs' tie-in with the Ice Capades is another good example of entertainment marketing. The pantyhose manufacturer will be the show's sole corporate sponsor, the first in its history. Sole sponsorship means less clutter. The show travels from city to city, allowing L'eggs to gain maximum exposure and target its primary demographic group: women. The spring touring season is also L'eggs' major selling time.

"This sponsorship is a means of furthering our marketing objectives," said Jon R. Letzler, vice president of marketing management for L'eggs. "It offers an excellent integrated marketing opportunity to advertise and publicize our products to consumers and involve retailers at the grass-roots level."

"It's lifestyle marketing," said Alfred Schreiber, vice president, event marketing, Burson-Marsteller, which helped put together the American Express concert deal. "Companies are now trying to reach and touch the 'whole' person."–*A.S.*

Spending on the arts is up

Corporate sponsors are expected to spend 17% more on arts-related tie-ins in 1991, raising total expenditures to $176 million. Sports sponsorships, however, still get the lion's share of corporate dollars. Below are projections of 1991 spending.



Source: Special Events Report/International Events Group